

let me be your caregiver by finnxwheeler

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Summary:

Mike Wheeler is sick. Will Byers has to take care of him.

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Author's Note:

This was a prompt request that I received on Tumblr!
Enjoy!

Mike Wheeler and Will Byers were always the closest in their group of friends. When one was feeling down, the other one somehow knew. When one was nervous, the other could sense it. Their connection was bordering on psychic, and it was something that couldn't be explained through simple logic by anyone who knew them. It was something Will and Mike had shared since they were small children, meeting for the first time on that tiny playground at Hawkins Elementary. Mike's knees had been scraped and slightly bloody, and Will made them feel better by kissing them like his mother, Joyce, always had. Will had told Mike that "it'll take the pain away. My mommy always does it for mine!" They had been thick as thieves ever since.

It was that special shared connection that allowed Will to know the reason behind Mike's absence from school one cloudy March morning: Mike was sick. It was that very same connection which prompted Will to fake his own illness so that he was sent home, sneaking out when Joyce left for her work shift after bringing Will home. Will had biked to the Wheeler home in the drizzling rain as quickly as possible, wanting to beat the harder showers so that he wouldn't actually fall ill. He knew that he'd likely be in a lot of trouble with Joyce if she found out what he'd done, but he didn't care much at the moment. All Will knew, somehow, was that Mike was sick and needed looking after. If no one else was going to do it, then Will would. No matter what consequences he may face as a result.

Upon arriving at Mike's, he noticed that both vehicles were gone. This meant that Karen was out and Ted was at work, leaving Mike home alone. Will parked his bike, finding the house key under the doormat where Mike had once shown him, and unlocked the door.

"Mike?" Will called as he opened the door. "Are you here? It's Will."

There was no answer, so Will decided to look around and see if Mike was home. Perhaps Karen had taken him to the doctor, or maybe Mike was resting. Either way, Will refused to leave until he knew for sure. Mike rarely missed a day of school and that alone was extremely worrying to Will. If Will's gut instinct had been correct and Mike was sick, then what did he have? A stomach bug? A cold? Chicken pox? Measles? Pneumonia? Those last three were a long shot and almost completely irrational, but who ever said that worry and fear were rational emotions?

"Mike?" Will said again once he reached the top of the stairs. "Hello?"

"In here," Will heard a familiar voice croak, following it to Mike's bedroom and opening the door at once.

His best friend was in the bottom bunk of his room, blankets pulled to his chin. He looked very pale, his freckles standing out in stark contrast on his sheet-white face. There were a box of tissues, a small container of Vicks, liquid cold medicine, and cough drops next to the bed, a clear and obvious indication that all Mike had been ailed with was a cold. The relief that flooded Will was dizzying, and he said a silent thank-you to whatever forces that may be for the fact that it wasn't something far more serious.

"How...What are you doing here?" Mike questioned softly as Will walked into the bedroom. "Did someone tell you I was sick?"

"No," Will answered, taking off his shoes and jacket before sitting on the edge of Mike's bed. "I just had a feeling, that's all. Plus, you weren't in school and you never really miss any, so I just assumed."

"But how did you get to leave school?" Mike asked.

"I called Mom and said I was sick," Will replied. "So, she came to get me before going in to work."

"So, you lied to get out of school and to come over and see me?"

"Yes..."

"Will Byers! That is absolutely scandalous!"

"Oh, shut it," Will teased, frowning a bit as Mike began to cough loudly and almost uncontrollably. "You okay?"

"Yeah," Mike gasped once he got himself under proper control. "Chest cold, that's all. I probably won't be in school all week, Mom said. Maybe even a day or two into next week, too."

"That sucks," Will said, pressing the back of his hand to Mike's forehead. When he couldn't tell whether or not Mike was running a fever, he pressed his cheek to the other male's forehead. Both of them blushed. "You do feel a little warm, but that's expected with a cold. Do you need a cool rag?"

"That sounds nice," Mike said with a soft smile and nod. "Please?"

Will hurried to the bathroom, running a washcloth under cool water and rushing back to Mike. He gently applied the cloth to Mike's heated forehead, listening as Mike sighed in content. Will's eyes met Mike's, and both boys grinned.

"I can't believe you left school to come and take care of me," Mike said.

"What are friends for?" Will joked with a giggle. "Besides, I wanted to take care of you. Someone has to, you know?"

Mike nodded weakly, coughing again before meeting Will's eyes. "Thank you," he whispered. "I'm so lucky to have you as a friend. Mom went somewhere with Holly, Nancy is at school, and Dad is working, so it's good to have some company. I hate having to do everything while I'm not feeling well." He paused for a moment, then gave Will an apologetic smile. "Which reminds me...Would you mind making me some chicken noodle soup? You don't have to, I just...I'm so hungry, and I don't want to eat anything that'll hurt my throat more or make me more phlegmy or—"

"Say no more," Will said, wrinkling his nose in mock disgust. "Literally. That's so gross."

Mike stuck his tongue out at Will, winking at him as Will stood from the bed. "Mom keeps the canned stuff in the cupboard to the left of

the sink. Can you reach it?”

“If I stand on a stool I can,” Will replied, moving to Mike’s bedroom door. “Don’t worry, I’ll get it.”

“Okay,” Mike said. “Will?”

“Yes?”

“I want a grilled cheese and Sprite, too.”

As it turned out, Will didn’t need a stool to reach the small can of soup. It was perched in the front of the cupboard’s bottom shelf, residing between a can of Spaghetti-Os and canned carrots. Will grabbed a pan from the bottommost cupboard, as well as a skillet for the grilled cheese, and set to work.

As the soup heated on the stove, Will began cooking the sandwich and his mind also began to wander. He mostly thought about school, what he was missing and what he’d have to make up, but he was also thinking about his mother. Joyce would be incredibly upset if she found out about Will skipping school, but would she actually be hurt if she knew that it was for good reason? Mike wasn’t just Will’s best friend, he was Will’s crush, and he was fairly certain that his mother and brother already knew. If he told her that Mike was ill and needed his help, would she be happy, or would she ground him for a month? As Will flipped the grilled cheese in the skillet, he was unsure what the answer to that question would be. He began contemplating ways to get out of trouble and imagining every worse-case scenario that he could muster for the situation, just in case.

When the food was done, Will carried it—and an unopened can of Sprite with a bending straw—up to Mike’s room on a tray. The taller boy was sitting up in bed now, flipping through an old issue of X-Men. Will noticed then how truly unwell Mike looked, and how his eyes seemed to convey the illness that he was experiencing. Will couldn’t help but wish he was in Mike’s place instead, so that he no longer had to suffer.

"I'm back," Will announced, bringing the tray to the bed as Mike grinned. Will opened the soda for him and plucked the straw through the turned-around tab ("That's why it's designed like that," Jonathan had once told him). He sat on the edge of the bed as Mike began to eat, relieved to see that Mike was enjoying the grilled cheese. Will had been worried that he may have cooked it for too long, and possibly burned it some.

Mike had been so busy eating, that he hadn't noticed Will staring at him.

Will couldn't help himself. He was always so captivated by Mike Wheeler, by how beautiful and big-hearted he was and by how adorable he looked while eating, Will knew that it wasn't polite to stare at people as they ate, but he couldn't resist with Mike. He hated having a crush on his best friend, and he hated having those feelings for another boy. Was that even normal? According to his father, no. It was unnatural and completely immoral, but what did his father know? Booze, abuse, being a lousy dad, and cheating with twenty-something brunette women; that's all Lonnie Byers seemed to know.

Will sighed audibly, which caused Mike to frown. "Are you okay?" he asked, finishing the last of his food and slurping the last drop of Sprite from the can through the straw.

Look at him, Will thought sadly. He's sick and he's worrying about me. Why is he like this? Why does he make me feel this way? "Yeah," Will finally answered. "I'm okay."

"Are you sure?" Mike asked. "You seem really...distracted."

"I guess I'm just worried about what my mom will do when she finds out I faked being sick to leave school," Will said, and it was at least half-true. "That's all."

Mike knew that Will wasn't telling the entire truth, but he didn't push it any further. He was too sick for that. "Okay," he said, gently pushing the tray with empty contents toward Will. "I'm finished. Thank you for that; I really needed it."

Will grinned widely, taking the tray and getting up to go down to the

living room—or, possibly, the basement. He needed to distract himself from either kissing Mike or confessing his feelings for him—or both, perhaps. It was too overwhelming, and Mike didn't need that at the moment. He needed to get better and get back to school, not fret about his love life. Whatever kind of love life he was allowed to have at thirteen, anyway. Before Will could even get to the door, however, Mike was calling him back.

"Don't go," he begged. "Please?"

Will turned, smiling and nodding. He really couldn't say no to this boy's charm, could he? Without a word, he sat the tray next to the door and perched next to Mike on the bed. Will was surprised when Mike pulled him down to cuddle, a grin on Will's lips as he got into a comfortable position. Will's heart thudded in his chest as Mike pulled him close, Will's head laying over Mike's own chest and using it as a pillow. Will was soothed by the steady thump-thump, thump-thump of his heartbeat, and had to fight to stay awake as it further relaxed him. Mike needed him, but it turned out that what Mike had needed was sleep. When Will looked up about five minutes later, Mike was already deep in the middle of it.

Carefully, Will plucked up the courage and placed a kiss to the sleeping boy's lips. He blushed, even though Mike hadn't been aware of it, and soon fell into his own deep slumber. He was roused by a confused Karen an hour later, and he explained everything to her. She was so touched that she called Joyce and personally told her what had happened. Joyce was also moved, and agreed not to punish Will this time for lying and leaving school, but said that she would still have a stern talking-to with him once she was home from work that evening.

As it turned out, Will was somewhat punished two days later when he caught Mike's cold. But it was alright, because now it was Mike's turn to be the caregiver. It was the best medicine in the world, by a mile.